

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's courtesy in yielding me this time.

I heard the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Rules talk about how this is an easy issue to be a demagogue. Well, I would suggest what we heard from the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Stenholm) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. Spratt) was the antithesis of demagoguery. It does not require an emotional or irrational appeal to prejudice. They have been direct and straightforward in telling the consequences of the Republican approach to debt management and spending.

I should amend that. It is not the Republican approach, because the gentlemen I just referred to from South Carolina and from Texas represent many Republicans, like I do back in Oregon, that do not subscribe to this; and it insults them to suggest this is the Republican approach to budgeting.

The distinguished Committee on Rules member from New York talked about the mandate. Well, I would think the Republicans and the President would have a mandate if they had ever talked about this. I did not hear a single Republican talk about increasing the debt. I did not hear them talk about reckless spending on programs for special interests, divorcing it from reality. In fact, they employed tactics to disguise the fact that we had exceeded the debt limit. They have been borrowing from retirement and disability funds, for instance, we expired in October.

No, if they had talked about this directly and honestly to the American public, I would accept the notion there is a mandate. And in fact I would suggest if they had done that with their plans, they would not have had a mandate, because they would not have won the election.

The fact is we are incurring more debt than is necessary for weapons that do not add to security, for handouts to special interests that do not need them, and tax cuts for people who need them least, making them permanent regardless of the fiscal consequences.

We are given a program from the majority party and the President that, if we approved it, would almost double this problem over the next 10 years. I, for one, cannot go back home to campuses and look these young men and women in the eye and suggest that I was a part of approving it.

I long for the day when we have a bipartisan effort to reduce the deficit and to deal meaningfully with our spending priorities. But unless and until that happens, I will vote ``no" as the one way I have of protesting this bizarre divorce from reality, of the fiscal reality that all of us are going to have to live with.

Mr. Speaker, would that their rosy scenarios come to pass. In some respects, I hope that they will. I do not wish ill on our country. But the fact is, the policies and the practices are leading us down a path that we will regret for years to come.